

# Children's Bureau Is the Latest Institution of Uncle Sam

BY JOHN ELPRETH WATKINS.

If a parent or lover of youngsters, you will be interested in the children's bureau of the Federal Government, which President Taft's signature brought into being upon the 24th day of April.

Uncle Sam has 41,000,000 boys and girls in their teens and younger. Late in the afternoon of the 24th of April, he awoke to the fact that except as to their school training he knew very little about this vast army of juveniles, sufficient in numbers to form a junior republic of their own more populous than France. But through this new Federal office of juvenile affairs he will grow better and better acquainted with them henceforth until he learns the problems even of the most needy and most lowly.

## Young America's Maiden Aunt.

The first step in this direction has been the selection of a philanthropic and kind-hearted woman to act as the maiden aunt of all young Americans who have been neglected.

Politicians were astounded when, a few days ago, President Taft announced the appointment of Miss Julia Lathrop, of Chicago, as chief of the new children's bureau, at a salary of \$5,000 a year. No woman bureau chief had ever sat at the capital in all of the previous history of the republic. Here, with a vengeance, was the beginning of petticoat rule.

Now let me tell you something about Chief Lathrop. Like her sister settlement worker, Jane Addams, she is a product of the Illinois prairies, and with Jane Addams she has lived in that famous haven of the poor, Hull House, for a score of years. They are, consequently, clams, and both believe that life pivots in the homes of the lowly.

Young America's new maiden aunt is a graduate and also a trustee of Vassar College. Soon after joining Jane Addams's staff she rolled up her sleeves and went to work in the most soulful tenements of the city. She had herself appointed "county visitor" of the poor and assigned to the Chicago slums surrounding Hull House. During the year of the Chicago World's Fair the Governor elevated her to the State Board of Charities, whereon she served three terms. Throughout this service she always attacked problems of the charitable institutions from the viewpoint of the inmates rather than of the managers.

## Risked Her Life in Pestilence.

Her pluck was shown throughout the great smallpox epidemic following the World's Fair. She then exposed herself daily at the crowded pest house, where she worked like a Trojan to keep the pestilence from spreading to the poor. Next she started a house-cleaning of the charitable institutions, whence had come charges that political appointees were mistreating the inmates. To see actual conditions for herself she became an inmate of one institution after another, ate their food and slept in their beds. Then came splashing into print articles exposing the abuses discovered.

She next started in with another woman reformer, Mrs. Alice Evans, to secure a juvenile court and probation law for Illinois. And their efforts met with final success thirteen years ago, despite the fact that such legislation is now generally regarded as reflecting new ideas.

Chief Lathrop is none of your long-faced reformers. Witty and fully possessed of the saving sense of humor, she has a good story to tell in emphasis of a point to be gained. It has been said of her in print that "of all reformers that ever reformed she is least a nuisance."

The woman who said this, and a great deal more, was the well-known sociologist, Miss Lillian D. Wald, a native of Ohio, who at some of her age founded in New York City the Henry Street Nurses' Settlement, of which she is the head. Not only is she the mother of the new children's bureau, but the world's first organizer



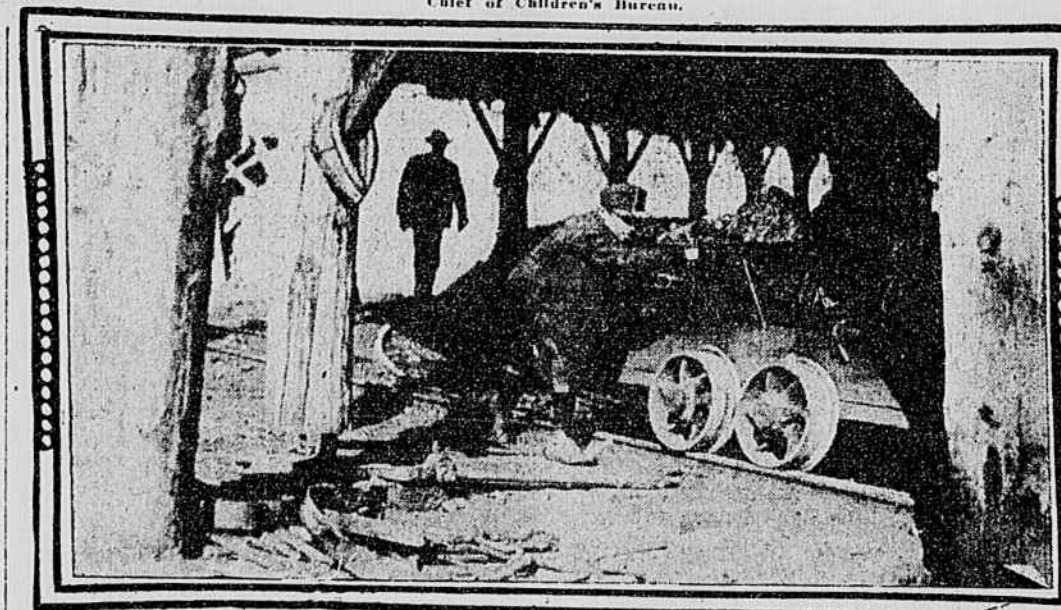
UNCLE SAM WILL GET ACQUAINTED WITH HIS CHILDREN.

MISS JULIA C. LATHROP, Chief of Children's Bureau.

of municipal school nursing. She is an officer of many organizations for social betterment and a member of the New York State Immigration Commission. A long list of powerful organizations, including the national child labor committee, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the American Federation of Labor, fell immediately into line behind her on the children's bureau proposition, which was fathered in Congress by Senators Crane, Flint and Borah and Representative Parsons (New York) and Peters (Massachusetts). Three of the most ardent workers for the enterprise have been Mrs. Florence Kelley, secretary of the National Consumers' League, who drafted the first outline of the bill's objects; Dr. Samuel McCune Lindsay, director of the New York School of Philanthropy; who, with Commissioner of Labor Neill, wrote the original measure; and Rev. Dr. Alexander J. McKelway, Southern secretary of the National Child Labor Committee, who for four years has tirelessly worked for the bill at Washington.

## What the Bureau Will Do.

Under her maternal eye the children's bureau will work for the conservation of the American child—its health and efficiency. Beside making investigations of its own, it will be the national clearing house for all kinds of information bearing upon the welfare of our 41,000,000 children. It is estimated that four-fifths of the defective legislation passed by our State Legislatures and municipal bodies is due to the local legislators' ignorance as to how far they are behind advanced progress made in other communities. So this national clearing-house is expected to reduce to a minimum such mistakes and worthless experiments as have been made hitherto by well-meaning champions of the American child. Thus will result greater uniformity in the framing of local laws and the gathering of local statistics concerning child welfare. The central bureau will furnish every community with any special information which it needs and this information will be gathered by a force of trained experts, commissioned to



HUNDREDS OF THESE ARE HIDDEN UNDERGROUND.

travel about the country and investigate conditions. One provision of the law creating the bureau is that none of its representatives "shall, over the objection of the head of the family, enter any house used exclusively as a family residence." No direct administrative function for furthering new measures or new laws will be given to the chief of the bureau or her experts.

## Will Turn Light on Evils.

But they will work strenuously to turn the light of publicity upon social evils of which our children are victims. The law creating the bureau states that it shall investigate and report "upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of children and child

life among all classes of our people, and shall especially investigate the questions of infant mortality, the birth rate, orphanage, juvenile courts, desertion, dangerous occupations, accidents and diseases of children, employment and legislation affecting children in the several States and Territories."

Four classes of boys and girls are to be especially investigated by the office. These are: Afflicted children, dependent children, delinquent children and children at work.

Infant mortality is one of the chief problems of our afflicted children, which the law says shall be especially investigated by the new bureau. It is charged that through lack of proper

information, anywhere from a million and a half to two million American babies are allowed to die every ten years—enough of our infants to populate another Philadelphia or Chicago. The diffusion of information which mothers and fathers need to save these babies' lives will be one of the prime functions of the children's bureau.

States representing only a half of the population of the United States as yet take the trouble to gather statistics on this subject. Those that do gather such figures find that twenty-seven out of each hundred of their children die before they are five years old. And among these the highest death rate for youngsters under kindergarten age is found in Pennsylvania, where it is thirty-four per hundred, while the lowest, in California, is only sixteen per hundred.

**Awful Sacrifice of Innocents.** About 3,000,000 of our babies die before they reach their fifth year, if the same average rate as found in the States keeping statistics is true also of those which do not register these deaths. Speaking of these tremendous rates of infant mortality, Representative Barnhart, of Indiana, while championing the children's bureau bill in the House, said the other day:

"It is declared that a million young American mothers are annually bringing children into the world with no qualification for the proper care of their health except love and devotion. The nation and the States have bureaus of scientific research which disseminate information on all topics of animal and industrial welfare, but scarcely a line is printed for free distribution, which would prepare young parents for such care of their children as would make of them sturdy and successful citizens."

## Food Poison, Epidemics, Blindness.

To help reduce our annual sacrifice of these millions of babies, the children's bureau will, in the first place, find out the death rates in all of these States and then endeavor to account for the wide divergence of the rates of different States. It will work on the principle that the American child's powers of successfully battling with the ills of tender age should be as uniformly normal in our various communities. Where the death rate of children is higher than the normal investigations will be made to determine whether the high rate is due to laxity of health department regulations, to the inability of the poor to employ competent physicians at child birth, to local epidemic of diseases, etc. Health regulations needed to protect communities from children's epidemics will be recommended.

Food poisoning will be another factor in infant mortality which the bureau will probe. From this cause twenty children die daily in Indiana, according to Dr. Hurty, head of that State's health department. Much-needed literature for the education of parents along other lines will also be disseminated by this new government office.

Accidents to children present another special problem which, according to the law, this new office must "especially" investigate. Such statistics as have been gathered to date show that children suffer numerous severely from accidents than do adults.

The blind child will also receive attention. If, as is charged, one-fourth of our totally blind need not have been so, then this new clearing house will supply the information which would save these thousands of victims of parental ignorance. Says Chairman Sullivan of the New York Association for the Blind: "Our blind asylums are now full of children supported at great expense to the State and private philanthropy, who could

## A PICTURE THAT IS A SERMON.

have been saved except for general ignorance of this subject."

## Mentally Subnormal Children.

Our mentally subnormal children are another large class of the afflicted which this new bureau will strive to help. It will learn how many of these unfortunate there are among us, how many are hopeless idiots and imbeciles, and how many are sufficiently self-directing to profit by special classes in school. It will learn where they are, what provision is made for their education, what is already spent for their training and how many of them are being trained to support themselves.

It is not claimed that all of these various classes of afflicted children can be saved to their parents or their country by the children's bureau. But it is claimed that the bureau's ascertainment of such facts as have been mentioned and its communication of these facts to local authorities will tend to the preservation of the lives of innumerable thousands of American children in the years to come.

Dependent children constitute the second general class which the bureau will study, and the law establishing it charges that special investigations under this class be devoted to orphanage and desertion. Senator Borah, who piloted the bill to final passage in his house of Congress, estimates that we have 14,000 dependent children, who cost us from \$25,000,000 to \$30,000,000 a year, spent by private organizations and public institutions. The children's bureau will find out how many of these are orphans and how many are illegitimate, how many of the fatherless ones and motherless ones have been deserted, what killed most of their dead fathers and mothers, how many have been orphaned by tuberculosis and industrial accidents.

Clues to preventable causes of orphanage will thus be scented out. An inquiry will be made as to the proportion of orphanage that results in child labor, and into the legal provision made by responsible employers for the orphans of workmen killed by accident.

**Problems of the Delinquent Child.** An annual reduction of our vast army of delinquent children will be a chief aim of this new institution.

At least 100,000 children are coming before our courts every year. The children's bureau will learn how many of these are committed to our jails and reformatories, what States still confine children in jails with hardened criminals, how many children com-

mitted to jails and reformatories return thereto, what occupations are most responsible for sending children to these institutions, and so on. It has been said that nearly half of our boy delinquents have occupations keeping them upon the streets, and that 90 per cent. of our delinquent children, as a whole, come from cities; also that one-fifth of the boys in some of our cities go to jail before they are of age. Jane Addams says that four-ninths of all arrests in the Chicago criminal courts are of youths between fifteen and twenty-five, of whom a large majority are under nineteen.

The child at work constitutes the fourth of the chief classes of juveniles whose problems will be sifted out and whose needs will be given publicity. The act constituting the children's bureau charges it with special investigation of "employment" and "dangerous occupations" of children. It will be one of the prime duties of the office to ascertain fully the light upon all of the iniquities of child labor.

It is estimated that between 1,700,000 and 2,000,000 children under sixteen are required to labor in this enlightened country. The bureau's experts will make a careful computation of the actual numbers, will investigate the conditions under which they labor and will gather other facts bearing upon their special problem. The comparative effects of different State labor laws upon health and vitality of children will be studied. All such facts will be furnished to associations working for child welfare.

## To Count Our Child Laborers.

Such organizations as well as legislators who have known for the first time how many American children are employed in manufacture, agriculture, commerce and the messenger service, and how many work underground, industrial diseases of children will be thoroughly probed, as will the related problem of children's compensation for occupational diseases.

All of our States now have child labor laws save one, Nevada, and in that Commonwealth it is proposed to pass such a law at the next session of the Legislature. Maryland has passed an excellent child labor law in the past year, and both Kentucky and Mississippi have passed good ones. Other States which, according to the national child labor committee, now have good laws of this character are New York, Ohio, Illinois, California, Oklahoma and Massachusetts, while those which have the poorest laws respecting the child worker are the Carolinas, Georgia, Florida and Alabama. Fourteen years is now the standard age limit for child laborers in all of the States except Texas and Montana, which have raised the limit to fifteen; North Carolina, where it is thirteen; South Carolina, Georgia, Florida and Alabama, where it is twelve. In Georgia children of dependent parents can be set to work as young as ten. Thirty-six of our States have already restricted night work by children and forty-two have established a maximum number of hours for a child's working day.

The total cost of the children's bureau will be \$29,440 per annum to be paid by the Department of Commerce and Labor and Miss Lathrop will have the aid of an assistant chief, a statistical expert, two special agents and a clerical force of eleven people. So, you will see that this new government institution will not be a heavy burden upon the taxpayer, especially when you take into consideration that, as David Starr Jordan puts it:

"Every child has the inalienable right to be born free from disease, free from deformity and with pure blood in its veins and arteries. Every child has the inalienable right to be loved; to have its individuality respected; to be trained in mind, body and soul; to be protected from disease, from evil influences and evil persons, and to have a fair chance in life. "That people is delinquent which does not unceasingly strive to secure these inalienable rights to its children." (Copyright, 1912, by John Elfreth Watkins.)

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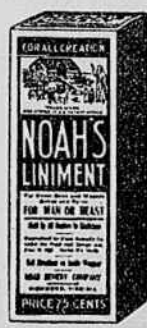
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